

**Maryland Historical Trust  
State Historic Sites Inventory Form**

Survey No. 35-42

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

M: 35-14

**1. Name** (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Bethesda Commercial District

**2. Location**

street & number Wisconsin Ave., from Battery La. to Bradley Blvd. not for publication

city, town Rockville vicinity of congressional district 7th

state Maryland county Montgomery

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property** (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name multiple ownership

street & number telephone no.:

city, town state and zip code

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse liber

street & number folio

city, town Rockville state Maryland

**6. Representation in Existing** Historical Surveys

title MNCPPC Historic Sites Inventory

date 1976 ☐ federal ☒ state ☒ county ☐ local

pository for survey records Park Historian's Office

city, town Rockville state Maryland

## 7. Description

Survey No.

M: 35-14

**Condition**

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

**Check one**

☐ unaltered  
☐ altered

**Check one**

☐ original site  
☐ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Bethesda Commercial District is an urban business area located in southeastern Montgomery County, not far from the D.C. line. Generally rather congested and exceedingly busy, the district is a recognized hub of commercial activity. The business area is centered around the Wisconsin Avenue, Old Georgetown Road and East-West Highway intersection and runs predominately along Wisconsin Avenue from Battery Lane to Bradley Boulevard.

The district began as a small crossroads providing a few limited services to the farming community that surrounded it. Growth was slow well into the 1900's. A couple of business did however, establish themselves in the early part of the century, near the crossroads and the railroad tracks to the south of it. A limited number of additional buildings were constructed here in the 1920's to 1930's. Beginning for the most part in the later 1930's businesses gradually moved outward, engulfing the earlier frame residences and undeveloped lots to the north and south. Although there was still a great deal of open space, by the late 1930's and early 1940's noticeable growth was taking place along Wisconsin Avenue. After World War II commercial expansion greatly increased, continuing to the present.

The business district today is one of the centers of activity in the down-county region. An area of multi-use (from speciality shops and restaurants to office condos) and rapid growth, the Bethesda Commercial District has seen many changes. These factors coupled with the varying styles in twentieth century architecture and the district's history of tearing down old buildings to make way for the new is responsible for creating the present unusual mixture of buildings. The result is best described by Benjamin Forgey of the Washington Post as, "a lively, richly textured streetscape."

## 8. Significance

Survey No.

M:35-14

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

### Specific dates

### Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/orApplicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ GLevel of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Bethesda Commercial District is significant for its examples of early to mid twentieth century commercial buildings, a number of which embody the distinctive characteristics of commercial architecture of this period. In a variety of styles from Art Deco to Tudor, they reflect the growth of the district from its early beginnings to the present. The more significant buildings in addition, have established themselves as familiar visual features of the commercial district because they represent the district's early development and have survived the waves of new construction and revitalization which have taken place over the past forty years or so. Furthermore, the Bethesda Commercial District is significant as a commercial area illustrating the history of suburban development in Montgomery County. The Bethesda-Chevy Chase area was among the first in the county to establish suburban subdivisions thus setting the pace for a movement from a primarily rural, agricultural county to the present, largely suburban one. The commercial district itself, a result of this movement, once served as the center of retail trade for western Montgomery County and is still a vital business center. Valuable as part of the earlier suburban phenomenon, the Bethesda Commercial District therefore contributes to the broader patterns of the history and growth of the county.

## HISTORY & SUPPORT

Bethesda, or Darcey's store as it was earlier referred to, began as a farming community. The intersection of Wisconsin Avenue, Old Georgetown Road and East-West Highway was the heart of the community with a blacksmith shop, a store or two and a toll house which collected 5¢ from travelers passing through on their way to Georgetown. In 1900 Bethesda's only store was said to be that of Alfred Wilson and included groceries, dry goods, hardware, a post office, etc. The area remained predominately farmland well into the twentieth century. The first interest in the development of the Bethesda area began in the 1890's with the Chevy Chase Land Company who bought up property with the intent of developing subdivisions. Local landholders, sensing the demand for suburban settlement for nearby D.C. followed suit and sold and/or subdivided their farms. Thus, by the early 1900's subdivisions were springing up all over the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area (including the present commercial district).

Although growth was taking place around it, the business area was slow to follow despite the fact that Bethesda (like Wheaton and Silver Spring) saw major growth in the 1910's and 1920's when most regions of the county were declining in population. Still greatly undeveloped in 1919, the commercial area was described as a "sleepy place at the end of a horsecar line" with not much more than a blacksmith shop, Wilson's General Store and the original Bank of Bethesda. This early development was concentrated in the area around the Old Georgetown Road intersection and the railroad tracks to the south of it. North of the intersection, on the west side of Wisconsin Avenue, was an ice plant. Aside from this there was only a series of frame residences in this area until the later 1930's. A few additional buildings went up south of the intersection in the 1920's and 1930's.

Transportation lines, trolleys and the railroad, did help somewhat to open up Bethesda to growth during this early period. Trolley lines were extended by real estate developers in an effort to better serve their subdivisions and thereby stimulated residential growth. Commercial growth was enhanced by the coming of the B&O Railroad in 1910. The railroad resulted in the creation of some industry significant to turn of the century Bethesda. Included were a number of coal yards, lumber yards, a planning mill and the ice plant as well as stagestops.

The first major commercial building was constructed in the district in 1926, the present Bank of Bethesda. Aside from the bank, in 1926 the Chevy Chase Gazette listed the following businesses in Bethesda: three garage/filling stations, a drug store, hardware store, variety store, grocery store, two feed stores, two barber shops and three small lunchrooms. There was still only a handful of retail shops along the entire stretch of Wisconsin Avenue in 1936 although by now the two small shopping areas still standing to either side of Wisconsin Avenue and Leland Street had been constructed.<sup>1</sup> It was not until the later 1930's that significant growth began to take place, filling in some of the undeveloped lots and replacing some of the earlier frame buildings to the north and south of the initial concentration of growth. There was still, however,

<sup>1</sup>Two other shopping areas were constructed about this time also, both now gone.

a great deal of open space in the business district.

By 1940, 65% of the county's population was centralized in the Bethesda and Wheaton Districts. This was reflected in the urbanization that was taking place in Bethesda in the later 1930's and 1940's. The National Naval Medical Center, the cornerstone of which was laid in 1940, finally completed in 1942, was in part responsible for an increase in building during this period. Growth previously had been slow, but the anticipation of what the new medical center would bring to Bethesda set off a substantial rise in construction in the commercial district. The real boom in commercial development, however, did not take place until after World War II. Still more older buildings were torn down to be replaced with newer ones. (Thus, while there are still some buildings from the 1910's and 1920's standing, most of the earliest buildings in the present district date from the 1930's and 1940's). The majority of structures in the district today date from after World War II to the present. During the 1970's a number of larger office buildings were constructed in the district, attracted by Bethesda's central location. The district has since attracted additional new construction which has continued at a rapid pace.

The Bethesda Business District can be described as a rather haphazard product of twentieth century commercial development. Rapid growth after World War II is in part responsible for creating an unusual mix of building forms. The increasing growth of the business district serving Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Bradley Heights, Kenwood and other surrounding areas made it of considerable interest and concern. In 1939 and 1940 Bethesda was referred to in local papers as the "model business city" and a "good place for a boom town movie." Largely due to its proximity to Washington, D.C. it had the greatest growth and therefore a considerable volume of trade by the 1940's. Bethesda eventually became the retail trade center for that part of the county.<sup>1</sup> But even at this point observers were noting its incidental development. As stated in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Tribune in 1939, "In growing it has developed a hodge-podge of conglomerated architecture in which brand new stores adjoin age old frame houses and the large and small, the brick and the frame, the stone and the stucco are tumbled together." Little or no attempt was made to construct buildings sensitive to the existing ones. Thus, architectural styles, buildings materials and buildings sizes have continued to be liberally mixed.

Architecturally the Bethesda Commercial District has been considered by many as unattractive and outdated (thus the continual plea for new fronts for the older buildings) and, therefore, probably not worthy of preservation. As an article which appeared in the Sentinel in 1966 stated, "... Externally Bethesda lacks any degree of charm ... some merchants have showed signs of sprucing up their exteriors but the general effect is one of unmitigated ugliness." However, a number of individual buildings are significant as reflective of Bethesda's commercial beginnings. Furthermore, with the advent of modern shop-

<sup>1</sup>This changed somewhat in the 1950's when competition from other areas forced Bethesda's businesses to switch to service and speciality stores, and commercial concerns in general shifted to banking & finance and business offices.

ping centers and chain stores, the Bethesda Commercial District is one of a dying breed. The Sentinel article goes on to say, "The Bethesda Business District has something other than charm that many residents consider distinctive. It offers 101 services which a thriving suburban community needs ... Most of these shops are locally owned and operated ... It has the elements of a class appeal center, in contrast to the mass approach of the vast outlets along the Rockville Pike."

THE RESOURCES:

Beginning at the northern end of the district, the first buildings of interest is the Lotus restaurant at 8224 Wisconsin Avenue. It is noteworthy for its elaborate oriental facade which is truly reflective of the building's intended purpose, an oriental restaurant. The illusion of entering a pagoda of the far east has been created. Another interesting feature of this tastefully stylized building is its circular entry way.

The Little Tavern at 8100 Wisconsin Avenue is one of a number of hamburger restaurants fashioned after the "Old English" tavern style. Among the first fast-food type restaurants which now engulf the area, the Little Tavern is the predecessor of the diner which had reached its golden age by the late 1930's and 1940's. Like the diner, Little Tavern took advantage of the latest in modern building materials. More than any other structure of its age, the modern lunchroom such as this incorporated the new technology with its use of tile, formica, glass, metal alloys, vitrolite, neon, etc. This is one of four Little Tavern restaurants left standing in Montgomery County.

Also worth mentioning is the Tastee Diner on Cordell Avenue. Although drastically altered from the outside, its interior has retained the features typical of the golden age of the diner, not often found today.

The Super Surplus Center, 8008 Wisconsin Avenue, is one of the earliest of the buildings standing in the northern end of the district. Built about 1940, it is typical of commercial buildings built during that period. Its simple cubic form and flat surfaces relatively void of ornamentation emphasizes the mechanistic style in which modern architecture of this period had taken form. Sparse in decoration, the beauty of the building was to be found not in its ornamentation but in its strong, simplistic proportions. Ornamentation for the most part is resigned to a belt course of faceted brick near the roof line. There are a few other examples of this type building in the district, this being constructed during a mini-boom period. Other examples of this type in the district do show more design.

Next, on the opposite side of Wisconsin Avenue, is the Bethesda Cinema n' Drafthouse. The theater was built in 1938 including the shops in the adjoining wings (7725-7715) to form a small shopping center. It is now the oldest building still standing north of Pumphrey's Funeral Home. This building is of particular interest because it is the only example of Art Deco in the district. This style was a vast departure from the architectural styles that preceded it. It was a reflection of the rapid technological advancements and the mass production of the machine age of the 1920's to 1940's. Buildings of this period were aerodynamic, streamlined in design, stressing geometric and linear patterns. The theater, originally called the "Boro," opened in April of 1938 under the direction of Sidney Lust, a well known theater owner. It was designed by New York architect, John Eberson<sup>1</sup> and built by Woodmont Development Company. When built it was the latest in modern architecture and incorporated the newest in movie technology.

<sup>1</sup> John Eberson, one of the greatest names in Art Deco design, also designed the Silver Theater in Silver Spring, very similar to the Boro.

Fitted with "ultra-modern" features inside and out, as the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Tribune said of the Boro in 1938, it "breathes the very spirit of modernism ... the epitome of luxury, beauty and comfort." It was built to be "second to none in the Washington suburban area."

The linear brickwork of the facade is set-off in Deco style with contrasting black against cream. Its imposing marquee, itself second to none at the time, uses modern materials such as the new metal alloys and neon lighting. Its streamlined "Bethesda" looks as if it is about to blast-off into outer space. In addition to being a popular entertainment spot, the Bethesda theater also served the community as a gathering place for a number of neighborhood events.

Next door to the theater is what was originally the Esso service station. Built in 1939 it is very simple in design. It is long and low in proportions with only a hint of ornamentation along the roof line. It remains pretty much as it was when constructed.

Similar to the Esso station, on Hampden Lane is Euro Motorcars. This building was built in 1940 as Community Motors, Oldsmobile sales and service. Slightly more stylized than the Esso, this is also one of the earlier structures in the district devoted to auto service.

The commercial district has a few classically influenced native stone buildings, the first of which is the Bank of Bethesda. Built in 1926, it was considered "one of the most modern of its type in the greater Washington area."<sup>1</sup> An interesting architectural feature of this building is the reinforced concrete window sills and headers made by Lake Stone Company, a new innovation in construction. The bank was originally located at the opposite corner of Old Georgetown Road and Wisconsin Avenue. It was first established in 1919 and has been an important landmark as well as a vital business institution of the Bethesda Commercial District. The Bank was the first major commercial building to go up in the district and among the earliest still standing. It was remodeled in 1940 and 1954, resulting most noticeably in the addition of a new front entry.

Also of native stone construction and also considered to be "one of the most up-to-date buildings of its kind in the National Capital's suburbs"<sup>2</sup> is the Bethesda Post Office at 7400 Wisconsin Avenue. It was built in a "neo-georgian" style by the Sofarelli Brothers of New York in 1938. Somewhat more elaborate than the bank, interesting architectural features of the Post Office include its rounded topped windows and corresponding brick window heads and its hipped roof with cupola.

Next is the earliest building in the district still standing and perhaps the only building which could be considered truly reflective of the initial development of the Bethesda Commercial District is the Community Paint & Hardware Store at 7252 Wisconsin Ave. Now covered

<sup>1</sup>"Bethesda Bank Now Starting On 21st Year," Bethesda-Chevy Chase Tribune, 8 December, 1939.

<sup>2</sup>"Post Office to be Ready By June 15," Bethesda Tribune, 29 April, 1938.



with stucco, it is the last of the frame structures which had comprised most of the early development of Wisconsin Avenue. In addition, with its decorative cornice and extending display front, it is the only building in the district still influenced by the late victorian architecture. The building is believed to have been built by Alfred Wilson circa. 1900, but may be as early as 1891. The building was used to house Wilson's general store and post office.

Next door are two almost identical adjoining buildings, Big Wheel Bikes (7248 Wisconsin Avenue) and Demme Blackistone Florists (7242 Wisconsin Avenue). These two buildings were probably constructed in 1939 or 1940 by the Eisinger Company. They sit on the site of Robert Wilson's frame dwelling house which was torn down in 1938. The box-like, flat proportions of these buildings with their sparse ornamentation found in the cornice line, and the large display windows are more typical of 1940's commercial architecture. However, the roof which resembles that of Brooks Photographers across the street is more reminiscent of an earlier influence as are the medieval-gothic buttresses, generally found on ecclesiastical buildings, located at the south, side elevation.

Across the street is Brooks Photographers, 7349 Wisconsin Avenue. It was built sometime between 1915 and 1930 (probably closer to the former) by Dr. Benjamin Perry to be used as his home and office. The freestanding vernacular, narrow yet deep commercial building is typical of that found in American small towns over various periods. This basic type (seen in earlier nineteenth century architecture with Greek Revival and Victorian influences) has evolved over time to a simpler, less detailed form. Faint reflections of higher styles are seen in their simple detailing such as this buildings eight over eight light windows headed by large, flat lintels and its stepped gable ends with end chimneys in the roof. This building is among the oldest still standing in the commercial district.

Games People Play, Dan Daniels Printing and One Step Up; 7335, 7329 and 7327 Wisconsin Avenue are connecting stores said to have been built during the 1930's by John Eisinger of the Bethesda Building Company. 7327 served as the company's offices. These buildings are very similar architecturally to the style of the Super Surplus Center discussed previously. Like the Surplus Center, this building is box-like and flat; distinguished with horizontal bands of decorative brickwork.

Also reflective of this trend in building is F.W. Woolworth Co. This buildings too emphasizes flat cubic forms decorated with protruding brickwork. This building is somewhat more decorative than the others of its type in the district including a stepped roof line highlighted with concrete. It was built in 1938 to house F.W. Woolworths, who claim to be the leaders in the field of the 5¢ and 10¢ store. After 45 years of service this store is presently closing down.

On the other side of Wisconsin Avenue at 7218 is Fortuna, Inc. It is believed to have been built in the 1920's by Herbert Wilson who ran a grocery store here. The building is reflective of the "Four-Square"

style in architecture popular from the late 1890's through the 1920's. The basic form, as seen here, was a simple two story cube-shaped block with a hipped roof with little decoration and flat surfaces emphasizing its geometric structure.

Next door is N.J. Davis Jewelers, 7216 Wisconsin Avenue. This building was built in the mid to late 1920's, probably by Walter E. Perry. It is reflective of Moderne architecture in its plain surfaces and sharp detailing. The lines of the building segment the geometric shapes, stressing horizontals and verticals which are capped with medallions. It was one of a cluster of three shops in this style but, since the 1970's remodeling of the Charcoal Grill it is the only one of the three in its original form.

The Health Foods Store at 7210 Wisconsin Avenue is believed to have been built by Walter E. Perry in 1911 which would make it probably the second oldest building in the district. Mr. Perry began a feed business here in 1911 and maintained a business here for many decades. The building is very simple in style with next to no ornamentation. The second story windows are unusual with six over three lights, headed with plain lintels.

The Farm Women's Cooperative building was constructed in 1935 to house a depression era "self-help" market. The market was started by a group of Montgomery County farmer's wives in 1934. A successful business and a well known county landmark, the market still sells fresh produce, dairy products and baked goods. (For more information and a complete description of the building see file #35-14 of Montgomery County Historic Sites at the MNCPPC's Park Historian's Office).

At the southern end of the commercial district are two shopping complexes, one to either side of Wisconsin Avenue south of Leland Street. The one to the east side was built in Tudor style in the late 1920's. This style is associated with an "Old English" architectural form the distinctive feature of which is its exposed timbers. Its use in construction was part of a period revival taking place between 1900 and 1940. Tudor appeared in communities usually to create a "quaint" village effect. (It is seen in a number of cases in the county's earlier suburban areas such as here and in the Silver Spring region). Included among the original stores housed in this complex were the A&P grocery store at the north corner and the Sanitary grocery store (later to become Safeway) at the south.

The second complex, to the west of Wisconsin Avenue, is a more classically influenced brick and stone structure. Referred to as the Sacks Building after its builder, George Sacks (former president of the Bank of Bethesda and developer of this general area), it too was constructed in the late 1920's. Among the original businesses located here was the Northwest Motor Company which occupied the northwest corner of the building.

The last of the older buildings in the commercial district is the C&P Telephone Company building. It is a classically influenced, hipped roof structure which, like the bank and the post office, was constructed of native stone. A substantial wing conforming to the style of the original structure was added on in 1940.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. M: 35-14

Interviews with various Bethesda residents  
Bethesda Journal & Bethesda-Chevy Chase Tribune 1937-1941  
Klinge Real Estate Atlas of 1931, 1935, 1941, 1949 & 1959  
File on Bethesda at the Montgomery County Historical Society Library

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Catherine Crawford

organization Mont. Co. Historic Preservation Comm. Date 11/83

street & number telephone

city or town Rockville state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

## 1. General Information

M 35-42 M: 35-14

a. Name Bethesda, Maryland	b. Historic/Original Name Darcy's Store/Post Office	
c. File No. 13-0675/G01	d. Site Size (Sq. Ft.) 17,569	e. Site Size (Dimension) Irregular Shaped
f. Property Address 7400 Wisconsin Avenue Bethesda, MD 20814	g. Building Size (Sq. Ft.) 12,128	h. Building Size (Dimensions) 64'0" x 60'8"
i. Is Building Open to Public? Yes - Public Lobby		
k. Original Use Mercantile Establishment/U.S. Post Office		
l. Present Use U.S. Post Office		
Address of Office with Building Records (name and address of field office, region, etc. with official file.) Field Real Estate and Buildings Office P.O. Box 701, Columbia, MD 21045		

## 2. Property Appearance

a. Description of General Area (Describe neighborhood, historic district, and use & direct or indirect effect upon other building of historic interest. If more space is needed, attach additional sheets.) The Bethesda, Maryland Post Office is located within a commercial area and is not in an historic district.	b. General Condition of Property (Site and Building) At the time of original inspection in January 1983, the box lobby was in process of being expanded. The lobby area had been recently painted but the remainder of building needed painting badly. The vestibule ceiling and rear wall on mailing platform showed evidence of water seepage. Platform bumpers were missing. Very little employee parking and none for customers.
c. Description of Floorplan (Attach drawings if available.) First floor consists of public lobbies, Superintendent's office, rest rooms, mailing vestibule and mailing platform. (Original plan) Basement area consists of boiler, fuel, swing and storage rooms plus janitor's toilet and closet and carrier's toilet and unfinished and unexcavated areas. Copies of original plans are attached.	d. Description of Building Material (Roofs, walls, foundation, interior features, floor and ceiling, etc.) Roof - Slate with cupola and wood cornice Exterior - Stone and granite. Granite steps at front entrance. Interior Features: Walls - Plastered Floors - Lobby - Terrazo Workroom - Asphalt Plank Basement - Vinyl Asbestos Tile Ceiling - Suspended Foundation - Poured Concrete Public Lobby - Marble Wainscot Used

Description of unusual or unique subterranean features

## 3. Architectural History

M: 35-14

b. Date Constructed 1938	c. Date Restored/Renovated 1965	d. Date Moved to Present Site 1938
e. Original Builder (Name & Biographical Data) Unknown	f. Other Significant Participants (Names, relation to building, biographical data) Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of Treasury James A. Farley, Postmaster General Neal A. Melick, Supervising Engineer	
g. Original Architect (Name & Biographical Data) J. A. Simon Supervising Architect		
h. Restoration Architect or Designer (if building has been restored/renovated) Market, Tilghman, Nelson Associates, Architects		

## 4. Architectural Significance

Identify type, period, method of construction, artistic value, significant and distinguishable entity (See National Register criteria, 36 CFR 60.6, Criteria for Evaluation).

The building has no known architectural significance, other than exterior finish.

## 5. Historical Significance

Identify the broad patterns of American history (National, state or local level) or historic persons with whom the property is associated. (See National Register Criteria.)

Bethesda, in Hebrew Tongue meaning "House of Mercy" was named after the Bethesda Presbyterian Church which was built in 1820. Bethesda is an election district and not a town.

As best as can be determined, the first Post Office took occupancy in a corner of Darcy's Store in 1862. Darcy's Store was a mercantile business owned by William Darcy. The Post Office's name was changed to Bethesda in 1871. Rural delivery was established in 1893 under the supervision of Judge Alfred Wilson.

The Post Office lost its independence in the 1920's when it became a sub-station of Washington, DC.

In 1981, the Post Office again became an independent Post Office.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Should this property be nominated to the National Register? ☐ Yes ☒ No

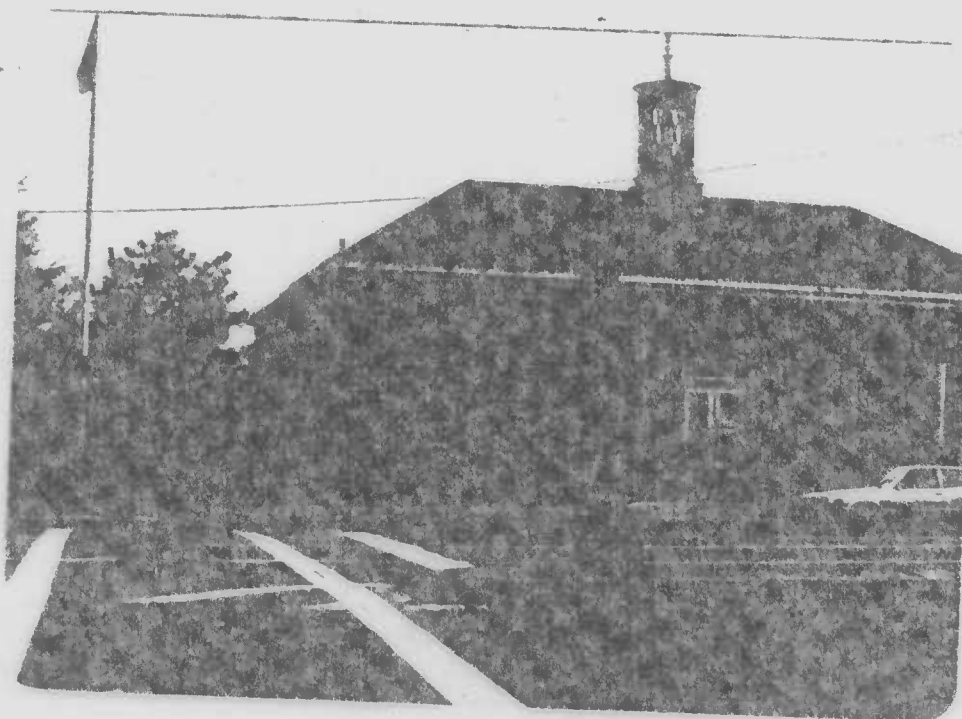
Give a brief statement to support your recommendation.

The building is neither historically nor architecturally significant. The architecture is typical of the period and is illustrative throughout the Eastern United States. As far as can be determined, there are no known historical persons or historical events associated with the building.

Prepared by Signature Thomas C. Kilpatrick	Final Recommendation by Signature Charles L. Fitzpatrick	
Title Real Estate Officer	Date March 30, 1983	Date Title Manager, Real Estate



Attach Photo Showing Front View



Attach Photo Showing Street View to the Right

M:35-14



Attach Photo Showing Street View to the Left

Attach additional photographs of other significant features here. Use a separate sheet if necessary.

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION  
ESTABLISHED BY PUBLIC LAW 94-470, OCTOBER 3, 1976

M.35-14

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

See correspondence dated October 1986

ACTION TAKEN

The following district and sites have been reviewed and found not suitable for regulation under the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Those properties listed on The Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County, Maryland will no longer be subject to regulation under the Moratorium on Alteration and Demolition, Section 24A-10 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. These properties will however remain on the Maryland Historical Trust's Inventory of State Historic Resources.

M: 35/14

M: 35/14-3

M: 35/14-6

M: 35/14-8

M: 35/14-9

Old Bethesda Historic District

Little Tavern

Brooks Photographers

Tudor Style Shopping Complex

C&P Telephone Company Building



M:35-14

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

See correspondence dated June 1, 1984

ACTION TAKEN

On May 31, 1984, the Montgomery County Planning Board held a public hearing, as required under the Moratorium on Alteration and Demolition, Section 24A-10 of the County Historic Preservation Ordinance, to make a finding on the significance of the following properties identified as resources to the Old Bethesda Commercial District listed as Site #35/14 in the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County, Maryland:

- 35/14-A - Games People Play, 7335 Wisconsin Avenue;  
Dan Daniels Printing, 7329 Wisconsin Avenue; and  
One Step Up, 7327 Wisconsin Avenue
- 35/14-B - F.W. Woolworth Company  
7207 Wisconsin Avenue
- 35/14-C - Fontuna, Inc., 7218 Wisconsin Avenue;  
N.Y. Jewelers, 7216 Wisconsin Avenue; and  
Health Foods Store, 7210 Wisconsin Avenue

These properties, located within the Bethesda Central-Business District, were found not to warrant designation on the master plan. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Planning Board closed the record and voted unanimously to remove these specific properties from the Locational Atlas in order to allow the issuance of a demolition permit on the sites.

Although removed from the Locational Atlas these properties will remain on the Maryland Historical Trust's Inventory.

M: 35-14

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION  
8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

(301) 795-4165  
**RECEIVED**

August 23, 1985

AUG 27 1985

MEMORANDUM

MARYLAND HISTORICAL  
TRUST

TO: Robert Benson, Director, Bethesda-Chevy Chase  
Center  
Richard Ferrara, Director, Department of Housing  
and Community Development  
John L. Menke, Director, Department of  
Environmental Protection  
✓ J. Rodney Little, Director, State Historic  
Preservation Office  
Priscilla Schwab, Chairperson, Historic  
Preservation Commission

FROM: Perry Berman, Chief, Community Planning South P.B.

SUBJECT: Preliminary Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for  
Historic Preservation: Bethesda CBD Multiple  
Resource/Thematic Historic District

-----

I am pleased to transmit to you this August 1985, Preliminary Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

This document contains the recommendation of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission on the designation of a non-contiguous thematic historic district in the Bethesda CBD.

The Montgomery County Planning Board will hold a public hearing on this Preliminary Draft Plan on Thursday, September 26, 1985, at 7:30 P.M., in the Auditorium of the Montgomery Regional Office at 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Should you have any questions concerning this amendment, please do not hesitate to contact Marty Reinhart of Community Planning North staff at 495-4565.

PB:MR:ms  
Attachment

M: 35-14

PRELIMINARY DRAFT AMENDMENT  
TO THE  
MASTER PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION:  
  
BETHESDA CBD  
MULTIPLE RESOURCE/THEMATIC HISTORIC DISTRICT  
ATLAS #35/14

August 1985

An amendment to the Approved and Adopted Bethesda Central District Sector Plan, 1976, as amended; and the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan, 1970, as amended; being also an amendment to the General Plan for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District and to the Master Plan of Highways within Montgomery County, Maryland.

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760

14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-3090

M:35-14

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Pursuant to Article 28 of the Annotated Code of Maryland and Chapter 24A and Chapter 33A of the Montgomery County Code, the Montgomery County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hereby gives notice that it will hold a public hearing on the following:

### PRELIMINARY DRAFT AMENDMENT TO

### THE MASTER PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION BETHESDA CBD/MULTIPLE RESOURCE/ THEMATIC HISTORIC DISTRICT

THURSDAY, September 26, 1985

at

7:30 P.M.

in the

Montgomery Regional Office Auditorium  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland

to take testimony on whether or not the following historic resource presently listed in the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County should be included in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Bethesda CBD Multiple Resource/Thematic Historic District #35/14 including:

1. Little Tavern #35/14-3  
8100 Wisconsin Avenue
2. Bethesda Theater Complex #35/14-4  
(Cinema 'n Draft House)  
7715-7723 Wisconsin Avenue
3. Bethesda Post Office #35/14-5  
7400 Wisconsin Avenue
4. Brooks Photographers #35/14-6  
7349 Wisconsin Avenue
5. Community Paint & Hardware Store #35/14-7  
7250 Wisconsin Avenue
6. Tudor Style Shopping Complex #35/14-8  
7003-7029 Wisconsin Avenue
7. C&P Telephone Company Building #35/14-9  
6925 Wisconsin Avenue

The following resource which is also considered part of the district has already been designated on the Master Plan:

The Farm Women's Market #35/14-1  
7155 Wisconsin Avenue (designated 9/79)

The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission has reviewed the architectural and historic significance of the Bethesda CBD according to criteria listed in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code.

The Preservation Commission recommends that the properties listed above be designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation as a "multiple resource/thematic" historic district with the individual buildings to be protected under the Historic Preservation Ordinance which provides certain controls regarding alteration, demolition, and maintenance of the property.

If not included in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, these individual properties and the district, as currently delineated in the Locational Atlas, would no longer be subject to the provision of Chapter 24A-10, the Moratorium on Alteration and Demolition. The district will, however, remain on the Maryland Historical Trust's Inventory.

The Preliminary Draft Amendment is available for public inspection at The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Regional Headquarters, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland.

The purpose of the public hearing is to allow all interested persons to express their views concerning this action. Persons wishing to testify should call 495-4600. If you are unable to attend, write your concerns to the Montgomery County Planning Board at 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20907 and they will be made part of the public hearing record.

*Thomas H. Countee, Jr.*  
Thomas H. Countee, Jr.  
Executive Director

THC:MR:ms

## ABSTRACT

**TITLE:** Preliminary Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Bethesda CBD Multiple Resource/Thematic Historic District

**AUTHOR:** The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

**SUBJECT:** Preliminary Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Bethesda CBD Multiple Resource/Thematic Historic District

**DATE:** August 1985

**PLANNING AGENCY:** The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

**SOURCE OF COPIES:** The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20907

**SERIES NUMBER:** 8053852506

**NUMBER OF PAGES:** 32

**ABSTRACT:** This document contains the text, with supporting maps, for an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and to the Approved and Adopted Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan, 1976. It contains the recommendations of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission to designate a non-contiguous, multiple resource historic district in the Bethesda CBD.

## THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bi-county agency created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties: the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two Counties.

The Commission has three major functions:

- (1) the preparation, adoption, and from time to time amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District;
- (2) the acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- (3) in Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire County public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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## INTRODUCTION

In July 1979 the County moved to establish permanent tools for protecting and preserving its historic and architectural heritage by adopting a functional Master Plan for Historic Preservation and enacting a Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the County Code.

The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission was created with the enactment of the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance and was charged with the responsibility of researching and evaluating historic resources according to criteria specified in the Ordinance. The Commission then recommends those worthy of preservation to the Montgomery County Planning Board for inclusion in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and protection under the Ordinance.

## THE AMENDMENT PROCESS

Upon receiving a recommendation from the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Board holds a public hearing to make its determination using the same criteria, considering the purposes of the Ordinance, and balancing the importance of the historic resource with other public interests.

If, in balance, the Planning Board finds the historic resource should be designated, it will then forward a Master Plan Amendment to the County Council. The Council may hold a hearing before it acts, if appropriate. Upon approval by the Council and adoption by the Planning Board of the amendment, the historic resource would then become designated on the Master Plan, and thus, subject to the protection of the Ordinance.

Like the Master Plan itself, these amendments would not attempt to specifically delineate the appurtenances and environmental setting for each resource. As a general rule, the resource would be recommended for placement with its original or existing property boundaries or, in the event of subdivision, at least the minimum size lot permitted by the zone in which the resource occurs, unless the Planning Board, upon the advice of the Historic Preservation Commission, finds that a larger area is essential to preserve the integrity of the site. The Master Plan Amendment will, however, indicate where the environmental setting is subject to refinement in the event of development. Where applicable, the amendment will describe an appropriate setting and specify those features of the site and their location relative to the resource that the setting is intended to protect. It is anticipated that for a majority of the sites designated, the appropriate point at which to refine the environmental setting will be when the property is subdivided. Designation of the entire parcel at the time of placement on the Master Plan will therefore allow the maximum flexibility to preserve the site while retaining the ability to be responsive to development plans which recognize important features of the resource.

Once designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, any substantial changes to the exterior of a resource or its environmental setting must be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission and a historic area work permit issued. The Ordinance also empowers the County's Department of Environmental Protection and the Historic Preservation Commission to prevent the demolition of historic buildings through neglect.

It is the intent of the Master Plan and Ordinance to provide a rational system for evaluating, protecting and enhancing Montgomery County's heritage for the benefit of present and future residents. The accompanying challenge is to weave protection of this heritage into the County's planning program so as to maximize community support for preservation and minimize infringement on private property rights.

THE AMENDMENT  
PROPOSED BETHESDA CBD  
MULTIPLE RESOURCE/THEMATIC HISTORIC DISTRICT  
ATLAS #35/14

(Note: *The following amendment reflects the findings and recommendations of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission as submitted to the Montgomery County Planning Board.*)

At its May 3 and May 17, 1984 meetings, the Montgomery County Preservation Commission evaluated the Bethesda Central Business District and the historic core of the CBD as identified in the County's Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites for possible placement on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. As a result of its evaluation, the Preservation Commission unanimously recommends the designation of a non-contiguous, multiple resource, thematic historic district in the Bethesda CBD consisting of the following sites:

M:35-14 -

- 03 1. Little Tavern  
8100 Wisconsin Avenue
- 04 2. Bethesda Theater Complex (Cinema 'n Drafthouse)  
7715 - 7723 Wisconsin Avenue
- 05 3. Bethesda Post Office  
7400 Wisconsin Avenue
- 06 4. Brooks Photographers  
7349 Wisconsin Avenue
- 07 5. Community Paint and Hardware  
7250 Wisconsin Avenue
- 01 6. Farm Women's Market\*  
7155 Wisconsin Avenue
- 08 7. Tudor Style Shopping Complex  
7003 - 7029 Wisconsin Avenue
- 09 8. C&P Telephone Company Building  
6925 Wisconsin Avenue

---

\* Already designated as part of the original Master Plan for Historic Preservation, Approved and Adopted September 1979.

### Ordinance Criteria and District Guidelines Values

The Preservation Commission finds the proposed multiple resource/thematic district specifically meets the following Ordinance criteria for Master Plan designation: (See Appendix A for a complete copy of the Ordinance)

- 1A. "Has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation" - in this case, the development of the County as it is reflected in the growth of commercial Bethesda from the late 19th to the mid-20th century;
- 1D. "Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities" - for reasons as stated in #1A and as it particularly exemplifies the economic heritage of the County;
- 2A. "Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction" - as it embodies a continuum of the characteristics, types, periods, and methods of construction of the late 19th through early 20th century commercial architecture;
- 2E. "Represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristics or landscape."

Additionally, the Preservation Commission finds the proposed district meets the following values outlined in the Commission's Guidelines For Historic Districts: (See Appendix B for a complete copy of the District Guidelines)

"Association: Areas associated with events or persons significant in Montgomery County, Maryland, or national history and/or social development; or areas associated with the development of the culture of a particular local ethnic group; EXAMPLES: Areas associated with the Civil War, the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad, or important to Black or Quaker history."

- The commercial area showing the gradual movement of suburbia and the development of commercial areas.

"Location: Areas which consist of a contiguous grouping of buildings, sites, objects and spaces, a majority of which continue to exist with the same mutual relationship as when they were first created or combined. Although this applies to groupings built at one period and/or of one particular style, it applies equally to residential and/or commercial areas which represent a continuous history of development and which have a pleasant intermingling of all architectural styles popular since their founding."

- This not being a contiguous but a linear grouping of building.

"Design: Areas which have a sense of cohesiveness expressed through a similarity and/or variety of architectural detail expressed through scale, height, proportion, materials, colors, textures, rhythm, silhouette, siting, etc. This is intended to

include not only districts of one certain architectural period but also the pleasant juxtaposition of different styles and different periods either commercial or residential."

- In terms of scale, proportion, materials, and a cohesiveness expressed by variety.

"Ambiance: Areas which convey a sense of time and place. The quality may be the quiet pastures, open vistas, and winding lanes of up-county farms of the early 1800's and the farm community which support them, or the activity of the bustling suburban communities."

- As the buildings convey a sense of time and place.

#### Historic Preservation Commission's Finding of Significance

The Preservation Commission finds the proposed multi-resource, Bethesda Historic District has a number of potential Master Plan sites which, when taken together, trace the growth of the downtown area. Furthermore, there exists in the district, buildings which are both architecturally and historically significant to Bethesda's commercial development. By beginning with the late Victorian general store, moving to the Tudor Style Shopping Complex or the C&P Telephone Company Building — both built in the late 1920's when limited commercial development had yet taken place — to the depression era Farm Women's Market, to the boom period modernism of the Little Tavern or the Bethesda Theater, a development is recognized. It is the development of the changing perception of building form and style; from the ornate Victorian to the stark, cubic form of the 1940's Modernism. Each says something about the period from which it came. Together, they speak of the phases through which the Bethesda Commercial District has passed, forming a steady progression from the old to the new.

Probably the earliest commercial building left standing in the district and the only surviving structure truly reminiscent of the initial development of the area is Community Paint and Hardware. Thus, its importance to the present business district cannot be disputed. Its architectural detailing, with its decorative bracketed cornice, is reflective of the late Victorian styling which has not been found elsewhere in the district.

This building was originally the 1890's general store and post office of Alfred Wilson. It was Bethesda's only store in 1900 and then contained a post office, grocery counter, dry goods, hardware and a fuel and feed supply. The building is now covered with stucco which was probably added during the early 20th century when it became a popular means of updating the look of buildings - especially commercial buildings. This, however, does not detract from the authentic appearance of this turn-of-century general store.

The building presently housing Brook Photographers attempts to fill the gap between the Victorian styling of Wilson's General Store and the classically influenced buildings of the late 1920's (like the bank and the C&P building). It was constructed sometime between 1915 and 1930 as the home and office of Dr. Benjamin Perry. The building anticipates the growth of the downtown area being one of the few buildings constructed before the post World War era and more than two stories. It is a freestanding, traditionally styled, narrow yet deep commercial structure typical of that found in American small towns over various periods.

Built during a period when the largely undeveloped commercial district included a mix of both commercial and residential structures is the Tudor Style Shopping Complex. This was one of three complexes built in the late 1920's (another sits directly across the street and the other is now gone). Built as presuburban shopping centers, they were not intended to be shopping centers in the modern sense of the term. The modern shopping center was a later product of the increased use of the automobile. The Tudor style of this complex is associated with an "Old English" architectural form, the distinctive feature of which is its exposed timbers in the center gable facade. Its use in construction was part of a period revival taking place between 1900 and 1940. Tudor appeared in communities to create a quaint village effect. It is found in some of Montgomery County's earlier suburban areas such as here and in the Silver Spring region.

Built about the same time was the C&P Telephone Company Building (1928). The C&P Building was constructed of native stone. Its architectural design is classically influenced. It was originally a two-story structure with a hipped roof and a rear extension. Then, in 1940, a substantial addition conforming to the style of the original structure was built. This included the addition of two stories, one of which was incorporated into the new mansard roof. At the time of its construction, this building was undoubtedly a real contribution to the growth of the commercial area.

The next building in the progression is the Bethesda Farm Women's Market. This is a well known Bethesda, as well as County landmark. The market building was constructed in 1935 to house a depression era self-help market. It was a unique organization, gathering farm women from all over the County in an attempt to help farmers, particularly hard hit, out of the depression. The Farm Women's Market was known for its produce, dairy products and baked goods, all fresh from the farm. The market has been in continuous operation since begun in 1934.

The Bethesda Post Office is one of a number of buildings constructed in the business district during the late 1930's. Coming at the tail end of the depression and the beginning of a boom period in the development of the commercial district, it marks Bethesda's rise from the depression to prosperity. It was constructed in 1938 by the Sofarelli Brothers of Jamaica, New York. It was built in Neo-Georgian style of native stone. Four other structures in the district were also constructed of native stone prior to the post office, including the Bank of Bethesda (1926), the C&P Telephone Company Building (1928), and two shopping complexes (1928). Thus, the post office was constructed in compatibility with the existing structures. The post office does, however, exhibit a bit more detailing than these buildings. When completed it was said to be "one of the most up-to-date buildings of its kind in the National Capital's Suburbs," according to postal officials.

The Bethesda Theater Complex is the finest product of the commercial district's first boom period which took place during the late 1930's and early 1940's. Buildings such as the theater helped usher in a new era in the development of commercial Bethesda. The theater opened in April of 1938 as the "Boro," renamed "Bethesda" in 1940. The Art Deco design was a result of the "Moderne" age, incorporating the latest in building materials and design. As typical of Art Deco, the theater's form is geometric and streamlined. The creme colored brick facade is set-off with bands of black. Its imposing marquee with its neon "BETHESDA" rises up in skyscraper-like imagery. As said of the theater upon its opening, it "breathes the very spirit of modernism . . . the epitome of luxury, beauty and comfort." Giving the Bethesda Theater Complex a somewhat broader significance is the fact that it was designed by nationally known theater architect, John Eberson.

Like the theater, the Little Tavern (1940) was a product of Bethesda's initial boom period. It is the precursor of the fast-food type restaurants that now engulf the area. Little Tavern is a chain of hamburger joints located throughout the Baltimore-Washington area, all built in the same "Old English" tavern style. The Little Tavern - truly a product of its age - took advantage of the latest in modern building materials as few structures did. It incorporated the new technology with its use of tile, vitrolite, formica, plate glass, metal alloys, and neon lighting. The result was a modern, shining, easy-clean lunchroom. This is one of four Little Taverns left standing in Montgomery County.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Thematic Historic District Concept and Ordinance Administration

Based on the Preservation Commission's formal recommendation, the proposed district essentially consists of a series of non-contiguous but related sites which the Commission finds architecturally or historically significant because they demonstrate the commercial evolution of the Bethesda Central Business District.

The thematic historic district concept proposed by the Preservation Commission represents a departure from the more familiar historic district consisting of contiguous historic buildings which produce a cohesive historic streetscape. As a series of non-contiguous resources with no specific delineated boundaries, regulatory control of the proposed district under the Ordinance would only be imposed on the environmental setting and exterior appearance of those buildings identified in the amendment as contributing resources to the thematic district. Intervening non-contributing properties would not be subject to regulation under the thematic district concept.

In the absence of a specific recommendation from the Preservation Commission, the Ordinance defines environmental setting as "... the entire parcel, as of the date on which the Historic Resource is designated on the Master Plan and structures thereon, on which is located a historic resource, unless reduced by the [Preservation] Commission, and to which it relates physically and/or visually. Appurtenances and environmental settings shall include, but not be limited to, walkways, and driveways (whether paved or not), vegetation (including trees, gardens, lawns), rocks, pasture, cropland and waterways."

If designated on the Master Plan, any significant changes to the exterior of the district's resources or their individual environmental settings must be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission and a Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) issued under Sections 24A-6, 7, and 8 of the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Approval of the proposed thematic historic district would also effectively remove the balance of the district identified in the County's Locational Atlas from further consideration for historic designation. If not designated, the following properties recognized as resources to that Locational Atlas district could be removed from the Atlas and any further regulation under the County's Preservation Ordinance:

- Big Wheel Bikes, 7248 Wisconsin Avenue
- Demme Blackstone Florist, 7242 Wisconsin Avenue
- Sacks Building (Parvizian Rugs), 7034 Wisconsin Avenue

These properties would be identified in the Appendix of the Master Plan as having been reviewed but found unsuitable for historic designation. They would be listed with the

following Atlas properties previously removed from historic consideration by recommendation of the Preservation Commission and action of Planning Board on May 31, 1984 pursuant to applications to demolish the buildings in order to begin the construction of several approved optional method projects in the CBD:

- Games People Play, 7335 Wisconsin Avenue
- Dan Daniels Printing, 7329 Wisconsin Avenue
- One Step Up, 7327 Wisconsin Avenue
- F.W. Woolworth Company, 7207 Wisconsin Avenue
- Fortuna, Inc., 7218 Wisconsin Avenue
- N.J. Jewelers, 7216 Wisconsin Avenue
- Health Foods Store, 7210 Wisconsin Avenue

### Preservation Incentives

Appendix A of the Master Plan for Historic Preservation outlines a number of federal and state incentives for designated historic properties including tax credits, tax benefits possible through the granting of easements on historic properties and outright grant or low interest loan programs.

In addition to these federal and state incentives, the Montgomery County Council passed legislation in September, 1984 to provide for a tax credit against County real property taxes in order to encourage the restoration and preservation of privately owned structures located in the County and designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation individually or within a historic district (Chapter 52, Art. VI).

The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission, together with the County's Department of Finance, administers the tax credit. Information concerning the eligibility requirements and application procedures for the credit is available through the Preservation Commission at 251-2799.

### Preservation/Planning Issues

Because these nominated properties are located within the Bethesda Central Business District and have the potential for redevelopment at a higher density, the Planning Board will need to balance historic designation with the public goals for the CBD as stated in the land use plan and zoning of the Approved and Adopted Sector Plan. The Planning Board welcomes comment from the affected owners and tenants as well as the general public on the following issues raised by the Preservation Commission's recommendation:

- The relative architectural and historic merit of the multiple resource/thematic district concept as proposed by the Preservation Commission.
- The individual historic and architectural merit of the resources identified and their potential for historic designation as individual historic sites.
- The relative merit of the remaining Locational Atlas district resources which could be removed from further consideration for historic designation.
- The effect of retaining any or all of the resources identified under the provisions of the Ordinance on the emerging Bethesda streetscape.

LEGEND:

1. LITTLE TAVERN #35/14-3  
8100 WISCONSIN
2. BETHESDA THEATER COMPLEX 35/14-4  
(CINEMA 'N' DRAFTHOUSE)  
7715-7723 WISCONSIN
3. BETHESDA POST OFFICE #35/14-5  
7400 WISCONSIN
4. BROOKS PHOTOGRAPHERS #35/14-6  
7349 WISCONSIN
5. COMMUNITY PAINT & HARDWARE STORE #35/14-7  
7250 WISCONSIN
6. FARM WOMEN'S MARKET #35/14-1  
7155 WISCONSIN
7. TUDOR STYLE SHOPPING COMPLEX #35/14-8  
7003-7029 WISCONSIN
8. C&P TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING 35/14-9  
6925 WISCONSIN

M:35-14

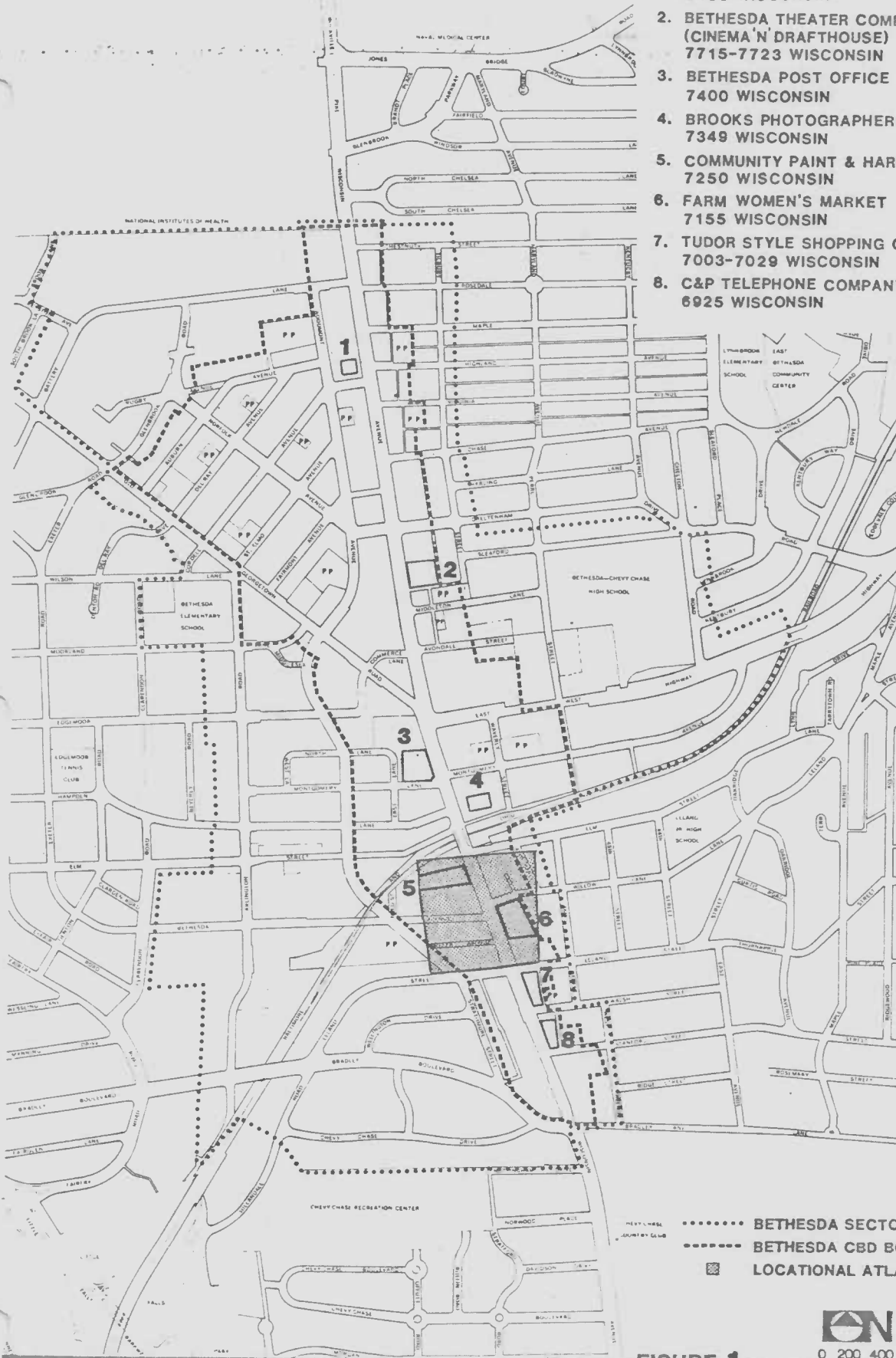


FIGURE 1

# BETHESDA CBD

MULTIPLE RESOURCE, THEMATIC HISTORIC DISTRICT PROPOSED BY  
 THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION





NAME OLD COMMERCIAL AREA NEAR RR TRACKS <sup>M: #35-14</sup>

LOCATION WISCONSIN AVE., BETHESDA, MD.

FACADE SE

PHOTO TAKEN 9/10/74

M. Dwyer



NAME OLD COMMERCIAL AREA M: #35-14  
LOCATION W SIDE OF WISCONSIN AVE., BETHESDA, MD.  
FACADE E  
PHOTO TAKEN 9/10/74  
M. DWYER